Four widows were discussing the difficulty in deciding what to do with the clothing in their spouses’ closets. One woman recounted the day after her husband’s funeral as she and her two daughters assembled in the master bedroom armed with boxes, trash bags and magic markers. With military precision, they reduced the task to three neat piles: clothes to keep, clothes to donate and those destined for the trash.

A second woman spied a notice from a local rehabilitation facility that was seeking donations of gently used business apparel so the program graduates could have proper attire to go out on job interviews. The next day, she gave 17 suits and dozens of neckties a new home.

A third woman spoke about how she was cutting up her partner’s flannel shirts and sewing them into memory bears, one for each of her five grandchildren. It was a tangible way to remember their Pop-Pop.

The fourth woman admitted that most mornings she flings open her significant other’s closet door and gazes longingly at the suits, pants, and shirts untouched in the two months since his death. She breathes deeply, inhaling his lingering scent. Four widows finding four different ways to downsize a closet and to come to terms with loss.

The death of a loved one presents survivors with many heart-wrenching decisions — what to do with a wedding ring, a full-length mink coat, an antique automobile and a collection of woodworking tools. Perhaps you yearn to fill countless boxes and drawers with every object your loved one ever owned, as if surrounding yourself with these cherished objects might somehow keep the memories of this person alive. Or perhaps it feels terribly disloyal to discard belongings that were such an important part of his or her life.

Coping with death is incredibly personal, so allow yourself to feel the myriad of conflicting emotions when you find that it’s time to tackle a loved one’s personal effects. Parting with some or all of these items is not a measure of the love you have for them, nor does it mean you are forgetting about them. If an item sparks a happy memory, take a photo of it as a way to capture that joy. As with all matters of grief, there is no right or wrong way to downsize or declutter. Acknowledge when you are ready to take the plunge. Do the task alone or with those who can support your decisions. Do what feels right to you and follow your heart.

Jean

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**Provided by St. Luke’s Hospice Bereavement Program**

_The most confused you will ever get is when you try to convince your heart and spirit of something your mind knows is a lie._

~ Shannon L. Adler
Coping with the Holidays

When you are grieving the death of a loved one, holidays are painful and poignant reminders that someone is missing. There are no right or wrong ways to get through holidays and special days when someone you loved has died. Planning ahead and determining what you can and can’t do does help. That’s why we’re offering several “Coping with the Holidays” workshops this fall.

During these sessions, we’ll introduce participants to the four Cs of coping — choose, compromise, communicate and control. We’ll also explore ways to cherish memories and develop a game plan that may be acceptable to you. To register for one of the workshops near you, please call Dawn at (484) 526-2249:

Brodheadsville—Tuesday, November 19 from 1:30—3:30 p.m. at the Brodheadsville ShopRite, 107 Kinsley Dr., Brodheadsville 18322 (upstairs community room).

Coaldale—Tuesday, November 12 from 12-2 p.m. at St. Luke’s Miners campus, 360 W. Ruddle St., Coaldale, 18218. (Education room, first floor).

Easton—Monday, November 4 from 5:30-7:30 p.m. at St. Luke’s Anderson Campus, 1872 St. Luke’s Blvd., Easton 18045 (Medical Office Building, lower level conference room A).

Quakertown—Thursday, November 21 from 6-8 p.m. at St. Luke’s Quakertown campus, 1021 Park Avenue, Quakertown, PA 18951 (Taylor conference room A-lower level).

Stroudsburg—Wednesday, November 6 from 6-8 p.m. at St. Luke’s Monroe campus, 100 St. Luke's Lane, Stroudsburg 18360 (conference room A-lower level).

Widow to Widow: Thoughtful, Practical Ideas for Rebuilding Your Life

In this remarkably useful guide, author, widow and therapist Genevieve Davis Ginsburg offers fellow widows as well as friends and family members advice for coping with the loss of a husband. From learning to travel and eating alone to creating new routines and surviving the holidays, Ginsburg gives guidance on dealing with tough emotions such as anger and guilt, handling money, maintaining family relationships and responding to offers for support.

Time of Remembrance

We hold our Times of Remembrance events throughout the year as a way to reflect, remember and celebrate the lives and legacies of the people who died on St. Luke’s Hospice service. These events are interfaith in nature and enable families and our hospice staff the time to reconnect and reminisce.

The next Time of Remembrance will be held on Sunday, December 1 beginning at 3 p.m. at Wesley United Methodist Church, 2540 Center Street, Bethlehem 18015. The names of patients from the Lehigh Valley area who died between July 1 and October 31 of this year will be read aloud. Invitations will be mailed to families in the coming weeks. We look forward to seeing you.
News & Events

Drumming Group Begins

For a truly unique approach to healing from loss, join us on a journey toward healing and new life. Anyone who is grieving the loss of a loved one is encouraged to discover the stress reducing power of the drum in a safe and supportive environment. No musical or drumming experience is necessary. Each week you’ll experience meditative drumming, guided imagery, inspiring readings and conversation to help move through your loss. Research indicates that drumming accelerates physical healing, boosts the immune system, releases emotional trauma and produces feelings of well-being. Drumming circles also provide a sense of connectedness to other grievers.

The next drumming group will be held on six consecutive Saturday mornings beginning in November (Nov 2, 9, 16, 23, 30 and Dec 7) from 10am to 12 noon at Lehigh Valley Friends Meetinghouse, 4116 Bath Pike (Route 512), Bethlehem, 18017. This group is led by a Remo HealthRhythms endorsed facilitator. To register, call Dawn at 484-526-2499. To learn more about the benefits of drumming, visit www.lvdrumcircle.com.

Lunch & Loss Group

Our weekly group has begun and it’s not too late to join us on Tuesday afternoons in November from noon until 2 p.m. to learn about grief and loss. We meet at St. Luke’s Miners Hospital Campus, 360 W. Ruddle St., Coaldale, PA 18218 in the first floor Education Room. Each week we focus on a different topic related to grief and loss. Lunch is provided. You can come to one or to all of the sessions but please let us know that you are coming so we can order enough food. To register, contact Tara George at (484) 526-2314.

Drop-in Grief Groups

Drop-In Groups enable you the chance to receive and provide support in a collaborative environment. Groups are facilitated by a grief counselor and participants are invited to suggest topics for discussion. Come and meet others to explore the challenges and experiences following the death of a loved one. No registration is needed. We offer three groups and each one meets for 90 minutes:

Easton: First Monday of every month from 4-5:30 pm at St. Luke’s Anderson Hospital Campus, 1872 St. Luke’s Blvd, Easton, 18045. We meet in the Medical Office building next to the hospital in the lower level conference room A.

Quakertown: Second Monday of every month from 6-7:30 pm at St. Luke’s Quakertown Hospital Campus, 1021 Park Avenue, Quakertown, 18951 in the cafeteria conference room (lower level of the hospital).

Brodheadsville: Third Tuesday of the month from 1:30-3 pm in the second floor community room at the Brodheadsville ShopRite, 107 Kinsley Drive, Brodheadsville, 18322. The community room is near the entrance to the store. No meeting will be held in December and in January, we’ll be holding meetings at a new location. Stay tuned!

Grief

I had my own notion of grief.

I thought it was a sad time that follows the death of someone you love and you had to push through it to get to the other side.

But I’m learning there is no other side.

There is no pushing through. But rather, there is absorption. Adjustment. Acceptance.

And grief is not something that you complete but rather you endure.

Grief is not a task to finish and move on, but an element of yourself — an alteration of your being.

A new way of seeing, a new definition of self.

~ Gwen Flowers
Additional Places to Find Support and Share Your Story

This is a list of free bereavement services in the area. Please call the bereavement office at 484-526-2499 if you are in need of something more or for referrals to other services.

**Adult Support Information**

**Bradbury Sullivan LGBT Community Center** at 522 W. Maple Street, Allentown 18101 offers a professionally led monthly bereavement support group for LGBT people who have experienced loss. The group meets on the 4th Tuesday of each month from 5:30-7:00 pm. Please register with Ariel@bradburysullivancenter.org.

**The Compassionate Friends** offers ongoing support groups for parents, grandparents and adult siblings grieving the loss of a child, grandchild or sibling. Visit their website at www.thecompassionatefriends.org or contact these local chapters: Allentown chapter (call Dawn De Long at 610-837-7924), Carbon County chapter (484-719-6753), Easton chapter (call Bailey Benner at 610-513526) and Quakertown chapter (484-408-7314).

**Doylesstown Hospital Hospice** offers a variety of support groups and programs that change seasonally. Visit www.dhospice.com or call 215-345-2079.

**Gentle Yoga for Grief, Stress and Life Transitions** is offered by Wendy Littner Thompson, M.Ed., LPC, RYT. Please contact her at 610-730-1992 or visit her website at www.givinggriefavoice.com to learn more. Let her know if your loved one was a St. Luke’s Hospice patient.

**Grief Share** is a faith-based grief support group program offered at many locations in the Lehigh Valley. There is a Grief Share program on Sundays from 2:30-4:30 p.m. at the Mt. Eaton Church in Saylorsburg, 18353. Call (570) 992-7050 for additional information. For other Grief Share locations throughout the area, visit their website — www.griefshare.org — and enter your zip code to find the location of a group near you.

**Grand View Hospital Hospice** offers many groups and services that change seasonally. Please call 215-453-4210 for more information.

**GRASP** is for families whom have experienced death due to substance abuse. The daytime support group meets at the First Presbyterian Church in Allentown, room 118 on the first Monday of the month at 12 noon. Please register with Jenny Kemps at 610-422-8490 or email jenkemps@ptd.net. The evening support group meets on the third Monday of the month from 7-8:30 pm. Please register with Nancy Howe at 484-788-9440 or email nancyhowe@ymail.com.

**HALOS – CLC (Hope After a Loved One’s Suicide – Child Loss Chapter)** is for parents, grandparents and adult siblings who have experienced loss of a child or sibling to suicide. The group meets on the 4th Thursday of the month from 6:30 – 8:30 pm at Hughes Library in Stroudsburg, PA. Call to register with Alice Keyes at 570-236-1168 or email at alicekeys00@gmail.com.

**Lehigh Valley Health Network** offers many groups and services that change seasonally. Please call 610-402-7481 for more information.

**Lehigh Valley Home Care & Hospice Pocono’s** bereavement support group meets on the first and third Wednesdays of the month from 12 noon-1 p.m. Anyone who has experienced the death of a loved one is invited to attend. The support group meets at 502 VNA Road, Route 447, East Stroudsburg, PA 18301. Please call Tammy Hiestand at 272-762-3826 to learn more.

**Suicide:** The American Foundation for Suicide Prevention has excellent information on risk factors, statistics, education and local services. Visit their website at www.afsp.org and enter your zip code to find the chapter nearest you. All chapters are run by people who have experienced the suicide of a loved one.

**Virtual Grief Support** is offered by Dr. Don Eisenhauer. Don has a background in counseling and pastoral ministry and runs monthly tele-grief groups and chat room support. Participants either dial in via phone or log in via computer to share with other grievers. For more information about the dates and times of these opportunities, contact Don at onlinegriefcommunity@gmail.com.

**Support Information for Children**

**Lehigh Valley Health Network** offers “Stepping Stones for Children” for ages 6 through 17. This is a combination of education, activities and support to help facilitate healthy grieving with others who are the same age. Please call 610-402-7481 to register. The group meets at 2024 Lehigh Street, Allentown, PA 18103.

**Support Information in New Jersey**

**Karen Ann Quinlan Hospice** 800-882-1117  www.karenannquinlanhospice.org/services/bereavement